Bhaṭṭanāyaka and the Vedānta Influence on Sanskrit Literary Theory

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In the history of Sanskrit literary theory Bhaṭṭanāyaka occupies an influential yet mysterious position. Abhinavagupta clearly owes a great debt to him, but since Bhaṭṭanāyaka's works themselves have been lost, it has proven difficult to understand exactly what that debt is. The common understanding is that Bhaṭṭanāyaka was a Mīmāṃsaka and that he applied the principles of Vedic hermeneutics to literature. But this actually doesn't fit well with much of what Abhinavagupta tells us about Bhaṭṭanāyaka, and upon closer inspection it becomes clear that in fact Abhinavagupta presents him as someone who was thoroughly interested in ideas drawn from non-dual Vedānta. This article reexamines the depictions of Bhaṭṭanāyaka in Abhinavagupta's works and shows that while the evidence for a Mīmāṃsā connection is quite thin, the evidence for a similar connection to Vedānta is quite strong. Taking this connection seriously helps us develop a much clearer picture of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas, and it also helps us understand various details of Abhinavagupta's response to Bhaṭṭanāyaka that would otherwise remain obscure.

INTRODUCTION

It has long been known that the literary theorist Bhaṭṭanāyaka (ca. 850–900 ce)[1] had a strong influence on Abhinavagupta's famous aesthetic theories. He figures prominently in Abhinavagupta's summary of prior aesthetic theories in the *Abhinavabhāratī*, and Abhinavagupta credits Bhaṭṭanāyaka with developing much of the terminology that became central to his analysis of aesthetic experience. Just what Bhaṭṭanāyaka actually thought, however, has remained something of a mystery, as nothing he wrote has survived intact.[2] Most of what we know about him has to be reconstructed from Abhinavagupta's summaries and quotes. But what we can reconstruct points strongly to the conclusion that Bhaṭṭanāyaka was an innovative and important figure in the history of Sanskrit literary theory.

In a series of articles and in his most recent book Sheldon Pollock has revived the study of Bhaṭṭanāyaka and has argued, among other things, that Bhaṭṭanāyaka is responsible for a crucial shift in how aesthetic experience was understood by Sanskrit intellectuals.[3] Prior to Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Pollock argues, aesthetic theory was focused on the text. This includes Ānandavardhana's famous *Dhvanyāloka* (ninth cent.), which analyzed literary emotions by trying to explain, in Pollock's words, how "an emotion can come to inhabit the *literary*

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1. For an analysis of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's dates see Pollock 2010: 144.

2. Pollock (2010: 143) thinks the *Hṛdayadarpaṇa* disappeared fairly early, as Mahimabhaṭṭa already in the eleventh century mentions he was unable to consult the "*darpaṇa*" before writing his own critique of poetic manifestation. Whether this means the text had actually disappeared or was simply unavailable to Mahimabhaṭṭa is unclear to me, but in any event the text is not now extant and seems not to have been for quite some time. See *VV* p. 5.

3. Pollock 1998, 2010, 2012, 2016. This particular thesis has recently been modified in important ways by Bronner (2016), who shows that the reader's experience was a concern of Kashmiri literary theory even before this point.

work" (Pollock 2010: 145). Bhaṭṭanāyaka, however, shifted the discussion, focusing not on the text itself so much as the experience the text produces in the reader. In this respect (and others) Abhinavagupta follows Bhaṭṭanāyaka faithfully.

According to Pollock, the basis for Bhaṭṭanāyaka's shift was his decision to theorize literature in terms of Sanskrit textual hermeneutics, or Mīmāṃsā.[4] Pollock is not alone in this interpretation; it is a typical understanding of Bhaṭṭanāyaka.[5] In Pollock's version of this argument, by far the most thorough, Mīmāṃsā, which had developed sophisticated ways of describing exactly how the words of the Vedas prompt humans to undertake rituals, was used by Bhaṭṭanāyaka as a way to think about how the words of a poem prompt human aesthetic experience. This hermeneutic system, Pollock argues, is at the root of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's literary theory, and is the key to understanding him.

The evidence for Bhaṭṭanāyaka's involvement with Mīmāṃsā, however, has been greatly exaggerated in these interpretations, to the point of obscuring other aspects of his thought. Mīmāṃsā, though perhaps present to some small degree, was certainly not the most important influence on Bhaṭṭanāyaka, and it is evident that many of his stated positions are orthogonal to Mīmāṃsā concerns, or even at odds with them, and cannot be explained in terms of them. On the other hand, theological ideas drawn from the tradition of non-dual Vedānta play a clear and prominent role in his thinking. Vedānta ideas not only take up a fairly large portion of what little material we have about Bhaṭṭanāyaka, they are also conceptually central to the ideas presented there, and to Abhinavagupta's response to them.

This fact has been curiously overlooked in modern scholarship on Bhaṭṭanāyaka, an oversight that results in multiple misunderstandings.[6] Without considering the Vedānta elements in his thought, Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas become cut off from their foundations and thus more difficult to understand, while Abhinavagupta's response to them, consequently, becomes puzzling and seemingly arbitrary. My aim, therefore, is to re-evaluate what we know about Bhaṭṭanāyaka, taking the clear Vedānta dimensions of his ideas more seriously, and to show that when we do this we gain a more nuanced and coherent picture of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's highly interesting aesthetic theory than the comparison to Mīmāṃsā can yield.

This re-evaluation necessarily works with the materials we have, which, again, are largely comprised of Abhinavagupta's summaries and quotations. This raises a problem. How do we know that Abhinavagupta is an honest witness to the real ideas of the historical Bhaṭṭanāyaka? How do we know whether or to what degree he is distorting them? Actually, we can't. The picture that emerges from this analysis—indeed from any possible analysis, unless we recover a copy of the lost *Hṛdayadarpaṇa*—will necessarily be of Bhaṭṭanāyaka-as-presented-by-Abhinavagupta, and not of Bhaṭṭanāyaka himself. But this is still desirable. By all accounts, Bhaṭṭanāyaka's work disappeared quite early, and it is through Abhinavagupta that his ideas have been passed on, not just to us but to the entire subsequent

    4. See Pollock 2010, 2012: 235–36, and 2016: 16–19 and 144–50.

    5. See Chintamani 1927: 268–69, Bhattacharya 1981: 32–33, and Balasubrahmanyam 1995: 57–63.

    6. The few places where Vedānta is mentioned in connection to Bhaṭṭanāyaka amount to stray references, and never serious or extended analysis. Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan (1990) point out a tenuous connection between Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Vedānta, but do this only in a few small footnotes: n. 18 on p. 229 and n. 42 on p. 232. Pollock (2016: 367 n. 3) mentions offhandedly that "Vedanta leanings seem likely," but leaves it at that and does not inquire into what that might mean about his theories. Leavitt (2011: 282 n. 3) describes one passage of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's as a "Vedāntic homology," but adds that the passage "has yet to receive the scholarly attention it deserves." Balasubrahmanya (1995: 67), on the other hand, who sees Bhaṭṭanāyaka as a Mīmāṃsaka, attributes some of his ideas to Sāṃkhya but fails to ask why a "Mīmāṃsaka" might bother adopting Sāṃkhya and misses the larger implications of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas. Chaturvedi (1995: 139–44) attributes these same ideas to Yoga, but also fails to see the larger implications.

Sanskrit tradition. Given this, it is important to see exactly how Abhinavagupta understood and portrayed Bhaṭṭanāyaka, and how he understood his own ideas by comparison, because this allows us to understand an important and influential moment in Sanskrit literary history *even if* that moment involved distortions of previous material. So with the *caveat* that the name "Bhaṭṭanāyaka" will, strictly speaking, refer to Bhaṭṭanāyaka-as-presented-by-Abhinavagupta, I will proceed to examine who this figure was. First I will present a basic overview of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's theory. Then I will explore the interpretation that this theory is firmly grounded in Mīmāṃsā. Finally, I will show how attention to Vedānta can help clarify both Bhaṭṭanāyaka's theory itself and Abhinavagupta's response.

OUTLINE OF BHAṬṬANĀYAKA'S THEORY

The main summary of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's position is found in Abhinavagupta's commentary on *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the famous dramaturgical manual. It is found in the section theoretically analyzing *rasa*, the aesthetic mood of a poem or play,[7] and is just one portion of Abhinavagupta's very long and well-known summary of various interpretations of Bharata's statement that "*rasa* arises from the conjunction of literary elements."[8] In the most basic sense, this statement means that when the proper combination of emotional factors is present in a scene, the *rasa* will somehow be present as well. In summarizing and refuting all previous interpretations, Abhinavagupta is building up to his own view, which is that the word "arises" in Bharata's statement actually means "manifested," in a very specific sense.[9] What precisely Abhinavagupta meant by "manifested" is complex. Ānandavardhana, the originator of this theory, meant by "manifestation" that the elements of a poem or play, when brought together in the correct way, could make a mood (or a plot fact or rhetorical figure) evident to the reader without stating it directly.[10] Bhaṭṭanāyaka had reportedly criticized this theory, and

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7. The following summary is based on *AbhBh-G*, p. 10: *bhaṭṭanāyakas tu āha. raso na pratīyate, notpad-yate, nābhivyajyate. svagatatvena hi pratītau karuṇe duḥkhitvaṃ syāt. na ca sā pratītir yuktā sītāder avibhāvatvāt svakāntāsmṛtyasaṃvedanāt, devatādau sādhāraṇīkaraṇāyogyatvāt, samudrollaṅghanāder asādhāraṇyāt. na ca tadvato rāmasya smṛtir anupalabdhatvāt. na ca śabdānumānādibhyas tatpratītau lokasya sarasatā yuktā pratyakṣād iva. nāyakayugalakāvabhāse hi pratyuta lajjājugupsāspṛhādisvocitacittavṛttyantarodayavyagratayā kā sarasatvakathāpi syāt. tan na pratītir anubhavasmṛtyādirūpā rasasya yuktā. utpattāv api tulyam etad dūṣaṇam. śaktirūpatvena pūrvaṃ sthitasya paścād abhivyaktau viṣayārjanatāratamyāpattiḥ. svagataparagatatvādi ca pūrvavad vikalpyam. tasmāt kāvye doṣābhavaguṇālaṃkāramayatvalakṣaṇena, nāṭye caturvidhābhinayarūpeṇa niviḍanija-mohasaṃkaṭatānivāraṇakāriṇā vibhāvādisādhāraṇīkaraṇātmanābhidhāto dvitīyenāṃśena bhāvakatvavyāpāreṇa bhāvyamāno raso 'nubhavasmṛtādivilakṣaṇena rajastamo 'nuvedhavaicitryabalād drutivastāravikāsātmanā sattvodrekaprakāśānandamayanijasaṃvidviśrāntilakṣaṇena parabrahmāsvādasavidhena bhogena paraṃ bhujyate iti.* This whole passage is well translated by Gnoli (pp. 43–51).

8. NŚ 1:266: *vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicārisaṃyogād rasaniṣpattiḥ.* I have translated the noun *niṣpattiḥ* as a verb here in the interest of readability. I have translated the various *bhāva*s simply as "elements" and refrained from listing them and explaining their complex interactions because this topic is peripheral to my concerns.

9. I use the terms "manifestation" or "poetic manifestation" to translate the Sanskrit terms *dhvani* and *vyañjanā,* rather than the more common translations "suggestion," or "implicature." This is because the term "manifestation" brings out more fully the overt philosophical implications that were intended in the Sanskrit. For more on this, see Reich 2016: 45–48.

10. Ānandavardhana explicitly attributes his poetic idea, and the terminology he uses for it, to the philosopher and grammarian Bhartṛhari, who used it to describe the way the uttered sounds of speech "manifest" the ideal structure of a language. See *DhĀ*, p. 142: *prathame hi vidvāṃso vaiyākaraṇāḥ, vyākaraṇamūlatvāt sarvavidyānām. te ca śrūyamāṇeṣu varṇeṣu dhvanir iti vyavaharanti. tathaivānyais tanmatānusāribhiḥ sūribhiḥ kāvyatattvārthadarśibhir vācyavācakasammiśraḥ śabdātmā kāvyam iti vyapadeśya vyañjakatvāt sāmyād dhvanir ity uktaḥ.* "For [grammarians] are pre-eminent among the wise, since all knowledge systems are based on grammar. And [grammarians] give the name 'manifestation' [*dhvani*] to the syllables that are heard [by the ear]. In the same way, other wise people, who follow their theories and who know the nature of poetry, give the term [poetic] manifestation to that essentially

Abhinavagupta then "defended" it, but in the process of defending it Abhinavagupta actually co-opted many ideas from Bhaṭṭanāyaka and changed the theory dramatically. Simply put, for Abhinavagupta, manifestation refers not to something internal to the text itself, but to the way in which the elements of a text can make latent emotional memories "manifest" within the mind of the spectator in a particular way that strips them of their individual, personal associations and allows the spectator to relish them as emotions-as-such. This gives the spectator a reflexive awareness of his own mind that transcends his subjectivity and is pleasurable because it mimics in a small way the blissful reflexive awareness of the god Śiva, who, in Abhinavagupta's monist idealistic theology, is in fact the supreme consciousness at the foundation of all our minds and of all reality.[11] In other words, manifestation puts us in touch with a deeper level of our being. In order to understand how all this relates to Bhaṭṭanāyaka, it is necessary first to understand how Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas are represented by Abhinavagupta.

The summary Abhinavagupta gives of Bhaṭṭanāyaka begins with Bhaṭṭanāyaka pointing out the problems that arise if *rasa* is understood to be a particular emotion tied to the subjectivity of a particular person: either the character or the audience member. Neither of these options is possible, according to Bhaṭṭanāyaka. He takes for his example the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the tragic story of king Rāma and his separation from his queen, Sītā. The sadness one feels while reading this poem cannot be perceived as pertaining to oneself, says Bhaṭṭanāyaka; that is, we do not experience it to be our own suffering. If this were the case no one would enjoy sad literature. Moreover, for a personal emotional experience to arise in an audience member during the love scenes the spectator would either have to 1) remember a particular person the spectator is or was in love with or 2) feel love for the actual characters being portrayed on stage (or, *mutatis mutandis,* on the page). The latter, option 2, cannot be taking place because it is the characters' love for each other that is being portrayed—a dialectic from which the spectator is necessarily excluded and in which he could only intervene inappropriately or mistakenly. Nor does the spectator have any personal memories of Rāma or Sītā that could be stirred and which he could be said to re-experience during the course of the poem or play. He doesn't even have memories of anyone similar to Rāma and Sītā, since the divinity of these two places them too far outside the ordinary course of human experience. The assumption here is that emotions, as processes that take place within an individual's mind, always have objects, which is in conflict with the fact that in the aesthetic context there is no object towards which a spectator's emotions could sensibly be directed. The conclusion is that the aestheticized correlates of ordinary emotions, whatever they might be, cannot be experiences that pertain to a subject and are directed towards an object. Although the spectator has access to them as forms of experience, they cannot be *his* experiences *of* something, the way ordinary emotions are.[12]

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linguistic thing called 'poetry,' in which expressions and the expressed are mingled, on account of the fact that it is the same with respect to its quality of manifestation."

11. This idea was first made explicit by Gerow (1994), but the view that aesthetic experience is a form of reflexive awareness for Abhinavagupta is commonly accepted and has been referred to by other scholars, including Bansat-Boudon (1992: 151; 2012: 232) and, most recently, Pollock (2016: 190). I have also tried to describe in detail how the reflexive awareness of aesthetic experience is related to the experience of the god Śiva in Reich 2016: 108–224), and some evidence for this is given below, in n. 67.

12. Pollock continually refers to Bhaṭṭanāyaka as "locating" the *rasa* in the spectator. See, for example, Pollock 2010: 146, and 2012: 233. This interpretation seems based on Dhanika and Dhanaṃjaya, who also take this view of *rasa*. While it is true that Bhaṭṭanāyaka thinks the *rasa* is a certain kind of experience that the spectator undergoes, it does not and cannot mean that the spectator feels it to be *his own* experience, or that he experiences it *as himself*, and it is precisely the possibility of this kind of transpersonal experience that Bhaṭṭanāyaka is arguing for.

On the other hand, the aestheticized emotions are not anyone else's either. If the emotion were not the spectator's own emotion and were instead encountered as an object on the stage or the page—the emotion somehow being "produced" there for him to encounter—then the emotion would have to pertain to the character. The spectator would be witnessing Rāma's emotion. The problem is that in this case the proper reaction would not be delight but shame, envy, or disgust, as would be the case if one were to spy on a couple in real life. And since this does not happen in a theater, the argument goes, this cannot be how aesthetic emotions work. Bhaṭṭanāyaka alleges that this same problem would apply whether we think of the emotions as "produced" in some literal sense or "manifested" in Ānandavardhana's sense, with the additional problem that "manifestation" admits of degrees, whereas a *rasa* is never partially manifested.[13]

One way to summarize all this might be simply to say that neither "this character is suffering" nor "I am suffering" can describe the experience one has sitting in the theater or reading a poem. So if *rasa* is not produced or manifested or perceived as one's own or another's, then what actually happens? Bhaṭṭanāyaka's answer is that there is a three-stage process, consisting in what he calls 1) *abhidhā,* 2) *bhāvanā* or *bhāvakatva,* and 3) *bhogīkaraṇa.*

Abhidhā in Sanskrit ordinarily means denotation—the process by which language communicates meaning or makes us aware of semantic objects. How exactly denotation works was widely debated by Sanskrit philosophers, and it is not quite clear what Bhaṭṭanāyaka means by it here, since he does not really describe it. He seems instead to take for granted that the reader will know what he means and writes only that the second stage, *bhāvakatva*, is something that exists "after" the stage of *abhidhā* [*abhidhātaḥ*]. As for what *bhāvakatva* is, Bhaṭṭanāyaka is more clear. A poem does not simply communicate semantic objects with language. It also ornaments these semantic objects in various ways, using rhetorical figures, stylistic flourishes, or the special conditions and conventionalized gestures of the theater, transforming the act of communication into something strange and unusual. This aspect of literature is called *bhāvakatva*.[14] The point is that while all speech denotes meaning, literary speech has a second aspect over and above this denotative one, which augments it or changes it.

In particular, the transformation that *bhāvakatva* brings about in language is that it defamiliarizes the objects of denotation, stripping them of their particularity. Bhaṭṭanāyaka calls this "*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*," which Pollock translates as commonalization.[15] It makes the character Sītā, for example, into a representation of woman-as-such, rather than a particular person who lived in a particular time and place and whom we have never met, thus allowing the spectators to relate to her.[16] At the same time, however, commonalization also applies

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13. This, at least, is Pollock's (2010: 165) interpretation of the strange phrase *viṣayārjanatāratamya*, in *śaktirūpatvena pūrvaṃ sthitasya paścād abhivyaktau viṣayārjanatāratamyāpattiḥ* (*AbhBh-G,* p. 10). Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan (1990: 221) translate it as "the spectator would make even greater efforts to obtain those objects." I confess myself unable to improve these translations or choose between them.

14. *AbhBh-G*, p. 10: *tasmāt kāvye doṣābhāvaguṇālaṃkāramayatvalakṣaṇena, nāṭye caturvidhābhinayarūpeṇa nividanijamohasaṃkaṭatānivāraṇakāriṇā vibhāvādisādhāraṇīkaraṇātmanābhidhāto dvitīyenāṃśena bhāvakatvavyāpāreṇa.* "By means of the function of *bhāvakatva*, which is the second aspect, after denotation, whose essence is a commonalization of the *vibhāva*s and whose form in drama is the four types of dramatic gestures, and which is marked in poetry by being composed of the absence of flaws, the presence of literary qualities, and rhetorical figures . . ." Pollock and others have proposed that Bhaṭṭanāyaka intends rhetorical figures to be included in the first stage, the stage of *abhidhā*. I treat this more extensively below.

15. Pollock 2010: 147. *AbhBh-G*, p. 10: *vibhāvādisādhāraṇīkaraṇātmanā.*

16. Pollock 2010: 155. Pollock further adds here that Dhanika and Dhanaṃjaya use this idea to get around a sticky moral problem: the problem of an audience member feeling lust or desire directly for Rāma's wife. Dhanika

to the spectators, changing the nature of their awareness. When it strips the objects of their particularity it also strips the spectators of the ordinary, habitual reactions they would have to such objects. Bhaṭṭanāyaka says it dissolves "the denseness of one's own thick delusions."[17] Bhaṭṭanāyaka does not expand on this phrase, but given the way it fits with his other ideas and given the way that Abhinavagupta incorporates this concept into his own theory, it is safe to say that these delusions have to do with a kind of stubborn self-consciousness that interferes with one's ability to get completely absorbed in the drama. The persistence of the awareness that one is an individual with a particular history and background, looking at a spectacle as an object, blocks the aesthetic experience. The fact that he calls this awareness a "delusion" where other Sanskrit theorists or modern readers would tend to assume precisely the opposite—that absorption in a fictitious plot is the delusion and that awareness of one's individuality is more real—is quite significant and will be discussed further below.

The functions of generalizing Sītā and dissolving the audience's self-consciousness are not two separate functions. They can be understood as a single function if we see it simply as a loosening of both sides of the problematic dialectic that Bhaṭṭanāyaka started with: that *rasa* cannot really *belong* either to the character or to the spectator, and so cannot be a *thing* of which one is aware. *Bhāvakatva* as a concept enables a literary theory that is free of this problem by positing a character (object) who is transformed by art into a generalized, depersonalized, non-specific entity, and a spectator or reader (subject) who is moved by that art into a state of freedom from his own identity and self-consciousness. So if locating *rasa* in a particular place is an aesthetic problem, *bhāvakatva* solves the problem by dissolving the two places *rasa* might be located, leaving it as a depersonalized experience that can't be "located" anywhere in the sense that it doesn't *pertain* to any particular person. Even if individual people can experience it, it is not their personal emotion and not an element of their subjectivity or individuality. It is a "commonalized" emotional experience, with a "commonalized" object.

In fact, dissolving these "locations" in which ordinary emotions are found is exactly what transforms those emotions into *rasa*. One might even say that Bhaṭṭanāyaka defines *rasa* just as an emotion that is freed from identification with a particular personality—one's own or another's. This is why *bhāvakatva* can be said to "bring the *rasa* into being," which is, after all, the meaning of the Sanskrit term.[18]

Once this *rasa* exists, savoring it is described as a third function. Bhaṭṭanāyaka calls this function *bhogīkaraṇa,* "transformation into enjoyment," and this enjoyment, though a form of experience, is not an ordinary experience; it is not something that we feel *ourselves* to be undergoing. It couldn't be, because our awareness of ourselves as individuals has already been dissolved by *bhāvakatva*. Bhaṭṭanāyaka therefore held that it is an enjoyment that is "different from experience and memory," and he says it is "marked by repose in one's own consciousness, which is comprised of light and bliss" and is "similar to the relishing of highest

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and Dhanaṃjaya, however, seem to emphasize this much more than Bhaṭṭanāyaka, for whom it is only a minor part of his argument.

17. *AbhBh-G*, p.10: *niviḍanijamohasaṃkaṭatānivāraṇakāriṇā.* Pollock (2010: 173 n. 44) insists here that no "metaphysical concerns need be assumed," meaning presumably that the "delusions" in question are unrelated to those described in Vedānta or Yoga. He makes the same point on p. 156, and again in n. 49. Pollock gives no reason for this assumption other than his own assurance, and, as I will show, there is much evidence to the contrary.

18. *AbhBh-G*, p. 10: *bhāvakatvavyāpāreṇa bhāvyamāno raso*. "The *rasa* is brought into being by the *bhāvakatva* function."

brahman,"[19] a reference to the God of the Upaniṣads and of non-dual Vedānta. The idea that one's own consciousness might transcend one's personality and subjectivity, and the idea that this is related to the experience of *brahman*, is quite significant and will be discussed further on. For now, we can note that Bhaṭṭanāyaka further characterizes this experience as having three forms—melting, spreading, or radiance—and that the differences between these three forms comes from the difference in how the three basic elements of the universe, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—which are something like lightness/purity (*sattva*), passion/energy (*rajas*), and darkness/dullness (*tamas*)—mingle in the spectator's mind.[20] These terms come originally from Sāṃkhya philosophy and are used extensively in Yoga, Vedānta, and also Śaivism to describe the composition of the universe and of human psychology.

This theory, we are told, was a refutation of the theory of *dhvani*. But Abhinavagupta responds to it by co-opting large parts of it: *rasa* as a form of experience and not an aspect of a text, commonalization of textual elements, the clearing of "obscurations" that block aesthetic experience, the idea that aesthetic relishing bears resemblance to religious experience, etc. Abhinavagupta borrows all of this and uses it to show that, *pace* Bhaṭṭanāyaka, the theory of *dhvani* can indeed explain the experience of *rasa*. But this alters Ānandavardhana's theory of *dhvani* quite dramatically, as none of this was present in his original version of the theory.[21] Pollock describes Abhinavagupta as "a commentator forced to transfigure the very meaning of the work he is commenting on to save it" (Pollock 2012: 239–40) and refers to "the acrobatics required by Abhinava[gupta] to retrofit [poetic manifestation's] epistemology for an ontology for which it was never intended" (Pollock 2010: 170).

This is an accurate description of Abhinavagupta's project, but it becomes necessary to ask, now that Pollock's work has put us in a position to see the question, why Abhinavagupta bothered to "save" the theory at all. If it required so much acrobatics, and if it does not fit with the ontology of *rasa* that Abhinavagupta wanted to use, why use it? Why not just write a commentary on Bhaṭṭanāyaka's *Sahṛdayadarpaṇa*, rather than labor over a forced interpretation of the *Dhvanyāloka*? The answer to these questions, and a fuller understanding of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas as they have been transmitted to us, can only be found by tracing theological ideas in Bhaṭṭanāyaka's work drawn from the tradition of Vedānta. Before we do this, however, we must first review the evidence for the standard interpretation that Bhaṭṭanāyaka is only applying Mīmāṃsā ideas to literary theory. Only when this evidence is shown to fall short in various ways will space be opened up to appreciate the significance of other elements of his thought, which would seem either entirely absent or at best superficial and irrelevant if we were to accept the centrality of Mīmāṃsā. Throughout all of this, a key point will be how to interpret Bhaṭṭanāyaka's use of the Sanskrit term *bhāvanā*, which has not one but two very different technical meanings in two different knowledge systems: Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta.

BHAṬṬANĀYAKA AS MĪMĀṂSAKA

Pollock is the most recent and most prominent scholar to posit that Bhaṭṭanāyaka's literary theory is primarily grounded in Mīmāṃsā.[22] His reasoning is as follows: Mīmāṃsakas

19. *AbhBh-G*, p.10: ʼnubhavasmṛtyādivilakṣaṇena . . . sattvodrekaprakāśānandamayanijasaṃvidviśrāntilakṣaṇena parabrahmāsvādasavidhena bhogena paraṃ bhujyate

20. *AbhBh-G*, p. 10: *rajastamo ʻnuvedhavaicitryabalād drutivistāravikāsātmanā*. Pollock (2010: 156) notes that there is a confusion in the textual transmission as to whether Bhaṭṭanāyaka accepted three variations of enjoyment or four, but this is not relevant to the argument I am trying to make.

21. For a more extensive analysis of some of the changes Abhinavagupta makes to the theory, see McCrea (2009: 365–82). I have also outlined them in Reich (2016: 170–208).

22. See, for example, Pollock 2016: 190 and 145–48, and Pollock 2010.

were concerned with understanding and interpreting Vedic injunctions to ritual sacrifice. In service of this project they developed an elaborate theory of how it is that scriptural language prompts people to undertake activities. The basic idea is that all language has an impelling force within it, called *bhāvanā*, which "brings about" action.[23] This force has three aspects (*aṃśa*), which together reproduce a similar pushing force within the listener. The three aspects are the answers to three questions that arise when one is made aware of the need to act: "What should be brought about?" "What instrument or means brings it about?" and "How should this instrument be used?" In the case of a Vedic injunction to sacrifice—where the stock example always given is "One who desires heaven should sacrifice"—one is first made aware that one *should* do something. What? The answer is: bring about heaven. By what means? By sacrifice. How should a sacrifice be carried out? The answer to this is the elaborate sacrificial instructions given in the Vedas.

Pollock argues that these three moments line up with Bhaṭṭanāyaka's three functions of *abhidhā, bhāvakatva/bhāvanā,* and *bhogīkaraṇa*, and tells us that Bhaṭṭanāyaka sees the production of aesthetic experience in terms of this structure. Enjoyment is what should be brought about, *bhāvakatva* or *bhāvanā* is the instrument, and *abhidhā* is the collection of literary techniques by which this instrument is employed. So Pollock concludes that Bhaṭṭanāyaka's explanation for how literature produces aesthetic experience is modeled on how the Vedas cause human to carry out sacrifices (Pollock 2016: 145–48).

Now, Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas do bear a superficial resemblance to Mīmāṃsā. He imputes a functional effect to language and divides it into three aspects called *aṃśa*s. Whether, however, there is actually a structural correlation between Bhaṭṭanāyaka's triad and the triad of Mīmāṃsā's pushing force, or *bhāvanā*, is more doubtful. In order to be compelling, the correlation would require a few things, none of which is actually the case.

First, it would require that language qualities (*guṇa*) and figures of speech (*alaṃkāra*) be included in the first stage, the stage of *abhidhā*, rather than in the second stage. In order for the overall poetic process to correlate to Mīmāṃsā, *abhidhā* needs to be a more particular set of methods for carrying out *bhāvakatva,* which in turn must be a broader category that simply refers to commonalization as such. And indeed we do find Pollock asserting this. He tells us that *abhidhā*, for Bhaṭṭanāyaka, refers specifically to literary speech, which is stylistically distinguished from other kinds of speech by its use of rhetorical figures and other flourishes, which signal to the reader that they should begin to let go of their ordinary reactions to language.[24] The basis for Pollock's interpretation here consists of later Sanskrit explanations of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's position, one small word in the *Locana*, and two verses in the *Abhinavabhāratī*. If we examine these closely, however, we find that none of these actually proves the point and that they are all contradicted by other evidence clearly stating that rhetorical figures and stylistic flourishes belong only to the second stage, the stage Bhaṭṭanāyaka calls *bhāvakatva* or *bhāvanā*.

First, we have the passage from the *Locana*, which reads *tena. . . dvitīyo vyāpāraḥ yadvaśād abhidhā vilakṣaṇaiva* (*DhĀ*, p. 193). Pollock (2010: 153) translates this as stating that *abhidhā* is "something 'completely different' from the language of scripture and everyday discourse." In fact, a much more natural translation is to interpret the verse as saying that it is only due to the power of the second function, *bhāvakatva*, that *abhidhā becomes* differ-

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23. This summary of *bhāvanā* is just a sketch. A very good summary is Ollett 2013.

24. See, for example, Pollock 2016:146: "The first is 'expression,' which here comprises all uses of expressive language, including figures of speech with their secondary meaning, so that it is best understood or even translated as 'literary language' . . ." See also Pollock 2010: 147, 153; 2016: 368 n. 6 and 369 n. 30.

ent from ordinary speech. Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan (1990: 222) translate this same sentence (more accurately, in my opinion) as "Therefore, there is a second operation . . . thanks to which denotation [*abhidhā*] assumes a new dimension." Based on the wording and grammar of the Sanskrit, it seems quite straightforward here that *abhidhā* is being described as ordinary speech that is *transformed* when the second operation intervenes.

As for the two verses in the *Abhinavabhāratī*, we should first note that they are only found in a quotation of this text by a later theorist, Hemacandra, where they are appended to a larger passage of the *Abhinavabhāratī*. In this larger passage, rhetorical figures, dramatic gestures, and other forms of non-natural stylization are all quite clearly stated to be a facet of the second function, *bhāvakatva*, and not of *abhidhā*. The larger passage, found in all versions of the text, contains the following statement: "*Rasa* . . . is brought about [*bhāvyamāna*] by *bhāvakatva*, a second function . . . whose form in drama is the fourfold system of dramatic gestures and whose defining mark in poetry is to be comprised of rhetorical figures and qualities and an absence of flaws."[25] After this passage Hemacandra adds two short verses that read *abhidhā bhāvanā cānyā tadbhogīkṛtam eva ca / abhidhādhāmatāṃ yāte śabdārthālaṃkṛtī tataḥ // bhāvanābhāvya eṣo 'pi śṛṅgārādigaṇo hi yat / tadbhogīkṛtarūpeṇa vyāpyate siddhimān naraḥ //*[26] Pollock (2016: 149) interprets these passages as evidence that rhetorical figures are meant to be in the first stage, the stage of *abhidhā*. He translates as follows:

> In literature, the "three components" are literary expression, a special type of actualization, and experientialization. To the abode of expression belong the figures of sound and sense. Actualization brings into being what we categorize as *rasa*s, the erotic and the rest. If a viewer/reader is a proficient one, the experientialization of these *rasa*s will completely pervade him.

I disagree with this translation. Firstly, it portrays Bhaṭṭanāyaka as directly contradicting what he himself has clearly said a few lines earlier: that rhetorical figures belong to the second stage. More importantly, abstract suffixes in Sanskrit (*-tā, -tva*) used with verbs of motion never mean "to belong to" but rather "to become." Rhetorical figures are therefore not said here to "belong to the abode" of *abhidhā*; they are said to "become an abode for it," meaning that *once* the *abhidhā* exists it is *then* adorned with a constellation of rhetorical figures and other flourishes that house it, as it were, and make it seem different, producing the "collection of *rasa*s" referred to in the next line. In this interpretation the verses, which, after all, seem intended as summary verses of the preceding passage, follow the same logic as this passage. That is, the verses do not define each of the three stages in turn but rather assume familiarity with the first stage, *abhidhā*, and start immediately with the second stage, telling us that it takes over where the first stage has ended and transforms it using rhetorical figures and so on. I therefore translate the verses as follows:

> [The stages of the literary process are:] [1] denotation, [2] another kind of *bhāvanā*, and [3] the transformation of that into enjoyment. Rhetorical figures of sound and sense [i.e., stage 2] become an abode for denotation [i.e., stage 1]. Then, the collection of *rasa*s, such as the erotic, which is brought about by [this process of] actualization, pervade the fortunate man in the form of enjoyment [stage 3].[27]

25. *AbhBh-G*, p. 10: *. . . kāvye doṣābhāvaguṇālaṃkāramayatvalakṣaṇena, nātye. . . abhidhāto dvitīyenāṃśena bhāvakatvavyāpāreṇa bhāvyamāno rasaḥ.*

26. *AbhBh-V*, vol. 1 p. 271: *abhidhā bhāvanā cānyā tadbhogīkṛtam eva ca . . .*

27. Raghavan (1932: 211 n. 1) suggests that Bhaṭṭanāyaka uses *abhidhā* in a technical sense to refer to the specifically poetic subject matter of a poem. I do not have space to address the subtleties of this point here and can

The first stage is not represented here as a more specific set of methods [*itikartavyatā*] for carrying out the second stage, as with Mīmāṃsā theories of *bhāvanā*. The second stage rather is presented as a deepening of awareness, involving rhetorical figures, wrought upon the subject matter set out at the first stage.

The correlation of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's concepts with Mīmāṃsā would also be more convincing if Bhaṭṭanāyaka were to use the term *bhāvanā* to refer to the literary process overall. If he did this, it would mean that he was directly comparing his entire three-stage process of literature to the three-stage Mīmāṃsā process of *bhāvanā*.[28] It is certain that Bhaṭṭanāyaka uses the term *bhāvanā* for the second of the three parts. Could he perhaps use the term to refer to both the overall process *and* one of the parts of that process? Pollock tells us that he does.[29] Hugo David, however, has recently pointed out that Bhaṭṭanāyaka himself never says such a thing and that the claim is instead based on statements by the fifteenth-century commentator Mallinātha, and so he concludes that *bhāvanā* is only meant to refer to the second stage, not the three-stage process overall.[30] Ollett has disagreed with this and re-asserted Pollock's claim on the grounds that there are only two ways to interpret Bhaṭṭanāyaka's statement that the second stage of the process is "another kind of *bhāvanā*": either he is contrasting it to Kumārila's version of *bhāvanā*, or he is contrasting it to the process overall. Since Ollett claims to show that he cannot be contrasting this kind of *bhāvanā* with Kumārila's, we are left only with the second interpretive possibility.[31] This would mean that Bhaṭṭanāyaka is essentially saying "The overall process is *bhāvanā,* but there is *another* kind of *bhāvanā* that characterizes the second stage." In addition to the fact that this would be a very strange thing for Bhaṭṭanāyaka to say, I believe there is a third possibility that Ollett overlooks that I will describe below.[32] But even aside from that, the mere possibility that in one small phrase—"another kind of *bhāvanā*"—Bhaṭṭanāyaka *might* be *implying* that the literary process overall is called *bhāvanā*—this seems like quite shaky ground on which to base the very large assertion of an overall correlation between Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas and Mīmāṃsā.

Another potential argument in Pollock's favor is that at one point in *Dhvanyālokalocana*, Abhinavagupta *seems* to interpret Bhaṭṭanāyaka's idea of *bhāvanā* according to Kumārila's model.[33] But again, this is deceptive. First of all, the passage comes after the summary of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's views has ended, in the section in which Abhinavagupta is critiquing these views. Furthermore, the context clarifies that the Mīmāṃsā concepts are not actually imputed to Bhaṭṭanāyaka. They are rather a part of Abhinavagupta's own theory, presented as a response to purported flaws in Bhaṭṭanāyaka's. This works as follows: Abhinavagupta

only reiterate the crucial point that Bhaṭṭanāyaka explicitly locates rhetorical figures and the ritualized gestures of actors in a second stage, which functions to transform *abhidhā* into something different.

28. Pollock asserts this at 2010: 151 and 2016: 146.

29. For example, Pollock 2016: 146.

30. David 2016: 145–47. Given Pollock's own assertion that the *Hṛdayadarpaṇa* had already disappeared by the eleventh century it seems highly unlikely that Mallinātha ever laid eyes on the text, and thus evidence based on him is especially weak.

31. Ollett 2016: 588. *AbhBh-V*, vol. 1 p. 271: *abhidhā bhāvanā cānyā tadbhogīkṛtam eva ca . . .*

32. See n. 60 below.

33. *DhĀ*, pp. 199–200. The passage is too long to quote in full, but the final portion reads *tasmād vyañja-katvākhyena vyāpāreṇa guṇālaṅkāraucityādikayetikartavyatayā kāvyaṃ bhāvakaṃ rasān bhāvayati, iti tryaṃśāyām api bhāvanāyāṃ karaṇāṃśe dhvananam eva nipatati*. This is translated in Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan (1990: 225) as follows: "Accordingly, with the operation known as suggestiveness serving as means and with the qualities, figures of speech, and propriety, etc., serving as procedure (*itikartavyatā*), poetry, which is effective (*bhāvaka*) [of *rasa*s], effects (*bhāvayati*) the *rasa*s; and in this three-termed scheme of efficacy (*bhāvanā* as understood by the Mīmāṃsakas) suggestiveness [*dhvani*] fits in as the means."

points out at the beginning of this small section that Bhaṭṭanāyaka has said that *rasa* is already existent, that it cannot be produced [*utpatti*], i.e., that it is *siddha,* "already established," not *sādhya,* "to-be-brought-about." But Bhaṭṭanāyaka has used a term, *bhāvakatva*, that implies that *rasa* is indeed "brought into being." Abhinavagupta sees this as a contradiction. In actual fact it is a standard Vedāntin idea about *brahman*—it is pure awareness that is already existent and can't be brought about, and yet somehow spiritual practices "bring it about" in the sense that they make one aware of it. But this model is consistently rejected as incoherent by Mīmāṃsakas, for whom anything that is "brought about" [*bhāvyate*] is necessarily not already established [*siddha*]. Abhinavagupta, in this section, is thus adopting a common Mīmāṃsā argument against Bhaṭṭanāyaka, saying that Bhaṭṭanāyaka can't claim both that *rasa* is *siddha* and that it is produced by *bhāvanā*. He then *himself* takes the Mīmāṃsā position, placing his own theory of *dhvani*, which he names explicitly, within a tripartite structure that matches the Mīmāṃsā theory of *bhāvanā*, thus showing that the contradictions in Bhaṭṭanāyaka's position can be resolved only by reinterpreting it according to Mīmāṃsā and accepting that *rasa* is indeed *sādhya*. Bhaṭṭanāyaka cannot do this because it conflicts with his other stated positions, but Abhinavagupta, with his theory of *dhvani*, can and does. In short, this whole passage is a rhetorical attack on Bhaṭṭanāyaka that follows the standard logic of Mīmāṃsā attacks on Vedānta. It is not a description of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's own ideas about *bhāvanā*.[34]

There is also a fragment translated by Pollock wherein Bhaṭṭanāyaka says that *rasa* is a kind of sentence meaning, just like the meaning of sentences in the Vedas, a seemingly Mīmāṃsā-esque position.[35] But this idea would fit with certain strands of Vedānta just as well as it would with Mīmāṃsā. In addition, Hemacandra places this quote outside of the main summary of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's views and describes it as an idea that Abhinavagupta accepts, in contrast to the earlier ideas, which are mainly rejected or co-opted and changed. Then, in order to explicate exactly what idea is at play here, Hemacandra cites Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* vs. 2.315, hardly the standard-bearer for Kumārila's ideas, even in these particular verses. Finally, Bhaṭṭanāyaka uses the Sanskrit term *saṃsarga* in this verse, a term that Pollock himself admits is usually associated with the Nyāya school, not with Mīmāṃsā (Pollock 2010: 178–79 n. 88).

So while Bhaṭṭanāyaka's process does have three parts like the Mīmāṃsā process, it is far from a perfect or unambiguous fit. And moreover, there is an alternative source for the tripartite structure that fits Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas much better, namely the Vedānta triad of reading, meditating, experiencing. So although it would be rash to definitely rule out all Mīmāṃsā influence on Bhaṭṭanāyaka, it does not seem to be the source for his ideas about *bhāvanā*.

All this evidence is "internal" to Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas, so to speak. It is based directly on what he says, or is reported to have said. There are, however, a few places where *other* thinkers seem to refer to Bhaṭṭanāyaka as a Mīmāṃsaka, and these might seem to justify interpreting his literary theory as Mīmāṃsā-based even against the considerations above.[36] Again,

34. This is similar to how Ingalls reads this passage. He writes of it: "By reducing Bhaṭṭanāyaka's term *bhāvanā* to its position in the Mīmāṃsā paradigm, Abhinavagupta claims that it implies nothing more than is already furnished by his own theory" (Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan 1990: 232 n. 45).

35. Pollock 2016: 149. The original is *AbhBh-V,* vol. 1 p. 271: *saṃsārgādir yathāśāstra ekatvāt phalayogataḥ / vākyārthas tadvad evātra śṛṅgārādiraso mataḥ.* As the editor notes here, this verse is found only in Hemacandra's *Kāvyānuśāsana* and the anonymous *Kalpalatāviveka.*

36. Bits of this evidence are discussed by David (2016: 145 n. 67) and again by Ollett (2016: 584 n. 5), and it seems to have first been outlined by Chintamani (1927: 269).

this evidence is not strong, but because it is generally taken for granted that it is conclusive, it needs to be reviewed briefly.

There are three places where Mīmāṃsā is mentioned in reference to Bhaṭṭanāyaka. The first appears in the *Locana*, when Abhinavagupta is arguing with Bhaṭṭanāyaka's interpretation of a particular verse of poetry and lists a small dialectical series of possible arguments in favor of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's position. These arguments are refuted in various ways and the very last argument of the series is refuted by saying, "This might work in Mīmāṃsā, but it doesn't work in poetry."[37] This, however, is not a characterization of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's original position. It is merely the way Abhinavagupta dismisses *one* of a variety of hypothetical ways of bolstering that position. Another is a quote from the *Abhinavabhāratī* in which Abhinavagupta dismisses one of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas by saying "He is just following Jaimini here."[38] This has been described as a characterization of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's use of the term *bhāvanā*, but this is plainly a misrepresentation (Balasubrahmanyam 1995: 60). The idea in question here is not *bhāvanā*, which is not mentioned in this section, but rather the definition of artistic success, and specifically whether a play's success is the goal to which it is oriented, or whether success is itself subordinated to the production of the play. As with the other piece of evidence, Abhinavagupta is referring only to a small aspect of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's argumentation, not trying to characterize his theory overall. Finally, in the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī*, Abhinavagupta refers once to Bhaṭṭanāyaka as "foremost among Mīmāṃsakas." This piece of evidence seems strong. However, Abhinavagupta surprisingly uses this epithet to introduce a quote in which Bhaṭṭanāyaka praises Śiva in the popular Kashmiri form of Svacchanda Bhairava and says that by Śiva's command even great sins are purificatory.[39] This is not exactly standard Mīmāṃsā fare, to say the least, Mīmāṃsakas being staunch atheists. Of course it is compatible for a Sanskrit intellectual to have been a Mīmāṃsaka and a devotee of Śiva, but given the context of the quote, which does not concern literary theory, it seems unconvincing to take this epithet as a straightforward clue that Bhaṭṭanāyaka's literary theory was based on Mīmāṃsā or Kumārila.

Other pieces of evidence seem to refer to Bhaṭṭanāyaka as a Mīmāṃsaka but in fact do not. Pollock asserts, for example, that Kalhaṇa's single epithet *caturvidyaḥ* meant that Bhaṭṭanāyaka "was an astute scholar of Mimamsa [*sic*]" (Pollock, 2016: 145). But a very similar epithet is used by Ādiśeṣa to refer to a Vedānta guru.[40]

Finally, there is the *Avaloka* commentary of Dhanika (975 CE), who, according to Pollock, viewed Bhaṭṭanāyaka as a Mīmāṃsaka and adopted his ideas.[41] I won't go into great detail here but will only remark that Dhanika never mentions Bhaṭṭanāyaka by name, and aside from a concern with the problems arising from the location of the *rasa* and a use of the term *bhāvyate* to say that the *rasa* is "produced" rather than "manifested," which Dhanika attributes to an anonymous former thinker who successfully argued this, I don't see how we can be sure Dhanika is referring to Bhaṭṭanāyaka at all, much less taking himself to be a faithful follower of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's theory, as Pollock implies.[42] This is especially so since,

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37. *DhĀ*, p. 63: *jaiminīyasūtraṃ hi evaṃ yojyate, na kāvyam.*

38. *AbhBh-V*, vol. 3 pp. 309–10: *kevalaṃ jaiminir anusṛtaḥ.*

39. *ĪPVV*, vol. 3 p. 96: *yad āha mīmāṃsakāgraṇīr bhaṭṭanāyakaḥ: mahānti pātakāny āhur yadājñāvaśataḥ surāḥ / pāvanāni namas tasmai svacchandāya harāya te //* "As Bhaṭṭanāyaka, the foremost of Mīmāṃsakas, says: 'Homage to that Svacchanda Hara, by the power of whose command those gods call great sins purifications.'"

40. The term used is *sāṅgavedavettā*, "Knower of the Vedas and their subsidiary sciences", and it refers to a teacher named Ādhāra, to whom the teachings of the *Paramārthasāra* are attributed. See *PĀS₁*, p. 17 and p. 42 n. 25.

41. See, e.g., Pollock 2012: 235.

42. Pollock 2012: 235; 2016: 144.

as Pollock himself admits, we know that Dhanika forcefully disagreed with at least one of the important positions we know to have been held by Bhaṭṭanāyaka: the possibility of *śāntarasa* in drama (Pollock 2016: 368 n. 19). So even if Dhanika was influenced by Bhaṭṭanāyaka, we have no way to know which of Dhanika's positions are faithful to Bhaṭṭanāyaka and which are not, nor which he properly understood and which he misunderstood.[43]

Kashmiri theorists of all stripes—including Abhinavagupta and Bhaṭṭanāyaka's opponent Ānandavardhana—were influenced by Mīmāṃsā and borrowed ideas from it frequently. Only rarely did this preclude involvement with other systems of thought. In light of this it would be strange, in retrospect, had Bhaṭṭanāyaka *not* borrowed a few ideas from Mīmāṃsā here and there, no matter what his own theological affiliations were. So the conclusion I draw is not that there is no Mīmāṃsā influence at all anywhere in Bhaṭṭanāyaka; it is that the evidence, such as it is, does not justify interpreting his literary theory as the application of Mīmāṃsā principles to literature, nor does it justify reading his use of the term *bhāvanā* as a reference to the Mīmāṃsā system.

This is especially so since there are important differences between Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas and that of the Mīmāṃsā. For one thing, Mīmāṃsā, as I mentioned, is famously atheistic, holding that the Vedas were eternal and without any author, human or divine. So these ideas can't be the source for Bhaṭṭanāyaka's "relishing of highest *brahman*." Nor can they explain Bhaṭṭanāyaka's description of the mind as consciousness "composed of light and bliss," or his use of the psychology of the three elements *sattva*, *rajas,* and *tamas*. These ideas are not part of the Mīmāṃsā system, and Mīmāṃsā was generally unconcerned with psychology and personal experience except insofar as they explain why we feel compelled to follow sacrificial instructions.

Most importantly, the interpretation of the term *bhāvanā* according to the Mīmāṃsā system does not fit the way that Bhaṭṭanāyaka uses it. In Mīmāṃsā, *bhāvanā* pushes one to perform an activity, but the process that Bhaṭṭanāyaka is describing prompts a particular kind of awareness, one that is based on the clearing of mental obscurations and consists in bliss.[44] He writes, in Pollock's translation, that "*rasa* is 'manifested' only by way of a manifestation called awareness, and its domain is the highest consciousness."[45] This bears much more in common with Vedānta, which posits enlightenment as a blissful and obscuration-free awareness, than it does with the procedures or results of Vedic sacrifices. And, as mentioned above, Abhinavagupta presents Bhaṭṭanāyaka as explicitly stating that *rasa* is something already fixed and existing [*siddha*], implying clearly that it is not something that

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43. Even if I am wrong about this, however, and Dhanika was faithfully following Bhaṭṭanāyaka, it is striking that Dhanika and his commentator Dhanaṃjaya also seem to have significant Vedānta influence evident in their theories, particularly in places that Pollock himself connects to Bhaṭṭanāyaka. See Pollock 2016: 177 and 381 n. 232.

44. Pollock tells us (2016: 147) that Bhaṭṭanāyaka considers the enjoyment of *rasa* to be a kind of action, but this is premised on the assumption that Bhaṭṭanāyaka is applying Mīmāṃsā to literary theory, not proof for it. The evidence he cites for this claim comes from Dhanika's *Avaloka* commentary on Dhanaṃjaya's *Daśarūpaka*. I have already discussed these two thinkers above, and will only say here that there is no reason to assume, based on statements of theirs that do not quote or clearly refer to Bhaṭṭanāyaka, that when Bhaṭṭanāyaka compares the relishing of *rasa* to the relishing of *brahman* he means the comparison to hold in every respect *except* for that which would have been most obvious to his readers: that the relishing of *brahman* is an objectless and actionless states of awareness. McCrea, though he follows Pollock in ascribing Mīmāṃsā theories to Bhaṭṭanāyaka, is at least aware that there is a discrepancy in this particular respect and acknowledges that *rasa* is not a kind of action for Bhaṭṭanāyaka. However, he does not point out the larger connection to Vedānta. See McCrea 2009: 389.

45. Pollock 2016: 149. From *AbhBh-G*, p. 11: *bhāvasaṃyojanāvyaṅgyaparasaṃvittigocaraḥ / āsvādanāt-mānubhavo rasaḥ kāvyārtha ucyate //*.

is to be accomplished [*sādhya*]*,* as a sacrifice is for Mīmāṃsakas.[46] Far from an adoption of Mīmāṃsā, this is an implicit rejection of its action-based teleology.

For these reasons, Mīmāṃsā is unconvincing as an explanation of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's literary theory. To understand what Bhaṭṭanāyaka was saying we need turn instead to non-dual Vedānta, the major body of thought that is obviously at play in Bhaṭṭanāyaka's writings.

BHAṬṬANĀYAKA AS VEDĀNTIN

Vedānta is a strand of South Asian religion with a long history and many interpretations. Though the philosopher Śaṃkara is the most famous exponent of this school in modern times, it seems clear that Śaṃkara's fame had not yet been secured in Kashmir in these centuries and that the most common representative of the school there was Maṇḍanamiśra.[47] We also know that another non-dual Vedānta text, the *Paramārthasāra* of Ādiśeṣa, circulated in Kashmir in these centuries and was studied closely studied by Abhinavagupta, who went so far as to rewrite it in his own name, in consonance with his own theology.

Despite their differences, Maṇḍanamiśra and Ādiśeṣa share the following basic view: the ultimate reality, *brahman*, is all that exists. *Brahman* is eternal and unchanging. It is consciousness with no division into subject and object, and its essential nature is bliss.[48] *Brahman* does not apprehend itself the way Śiva famously does in Abhinavagupta's theology,[49] primarily because Vedāntins hold that even self-apprehension would be a kind of division into subject and object, and also because self-apprehension, in Abhinavagupta's theology, is a kind of action, and *brahman* is entirely inactive in Vedānta. *Brahman's* nature is not to apprehend itself, nor to act in any way, but to exist as perfectly still, calm, eternal, and blissful awareness.[50] *Brahman's* state as pure awareness can combine with its actionlessness in this theology because the theology is grounded in a broader philosophy of mind in which cognition is held to be a passive reception of information; unlike non-dual Śaivas, non-dual Vedāntins hold that to be *aware* of something is different from to *act*, and that even when subject and object dissolve, awareness can still remain as a quiescent state of being (Potter 1981: 92–93).

For non-dual Vedāntins, although *brahman* is all that exists, divisions seem to appear within *brahman* due to the power of illusion, causing it to *seem* to split into individual subjects and objects, though in reality it never changes. *Brahman* then takes on the illusory

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46. *DhĀ,* p. 193: *sa eva ca pradhānabhūto 'ṃśaḥ siddharūpa iti* "That very stage [of the literary process], which is the chief thing [in poetry], has the form of something [already] accomplished." This should not be taken to mean simply that the *rasa* is accomplished *after* the poetic process has brought it about, because it is stated directly after Bhaṭṭanāyaka compares *rasa* to the experience of *brahman*, which is famously "*siddha*" in the sense that it is eternal and unchanging and can never be produced or brought about by action. I will discuss this more below.

47. See Ratié 2011: 257 n. 5 and 669–79, and Potter 1981: 604 n. 25. Ratié cites various instances where Abhinavagupta's Vedāntin interlocutors rely on arguments very close to Maṇḍanamiśra's and further from Śaṃkara's. See also Bansat-Boudon and Tripathi 2011: 8 n. 41, where the authors note that Kashmiri writers of this era in general seem rather unconcerned with the particular issues that divided Maṇḍanamiśra and Śaṃkara, though they seem quite aware of the distinction between this kind of non-dual Vedānta and that of Bhartṛhari.

48. For Maṇḍanamiśra's views on *brahman's* blissful nature, see Potter 1981: 76.

49. Abhinavagupta refers to this self-apprehension with terms like *vimarśa* and *pratyavamarśa,* and his use of these terms is so well known as not to need any citation.

50. For *brahman*'s lack of activity, see Potter 1981: 92. For the idea that Brahman is not the object of its own self-awareness and the assertion that this claim is "constitutive" of non-dual Vedānta, see Potter 1981: 7. Maṇḍanamiśra does hold that awareness is "self-illuminating" [*svaprakāśaka*, see *BSi*, p. 4], but he is careful to distinguish this from self-objectification, and in any event the emphasis on quiescence still distinguishes this theory from Abhinavagupta's *vimarśa*.

form of individual beings, who forget that they are *brahman* and falsely perceive themselves as limited individuals in a world full of objects and concepts. This state of ignorance is commonly described as "name and form" [*nāmarūpa*] or sometimes more specifically the "proliferation of name and form" [*nāmarūpaprapañca*].[51] The proliferation of name and form is not, as in non-dual Śaivism, the real and substantial creation of a divinity who pours outwards into duality while still retaining his unity.[52] It is rather an entirely non-existent illusion, based on primordial ignorance. The goal of religious practice is to remove this ignorance and achieve enlightenment by gaining knowledge of one's true condition as *brahman*. At this point all illusion and duality cease and one rests in eternal, peaceful, blissful freedom; or more accurately, one realizes that one has already been free and blissful from time without beginning. This is accomplished by the teachings of the Vedas, whose purpose, say the non-dual Vedāntins, is not ultimately to enjoin ritual but to teach the truth. Strictly speaking these teachings are false, since they are transmitted via language, which is based on conceptual divisions and thus based on illusion, but they are still useful in that they are capable of triggering an awareness of the truth under the right conditions.[53] Again, it is worth emphasizing that this state of liberation cannot be created. It already exists and is merely veiled, so it can only be revealed to awareness, not created.[54] And since it is a state of quiescence without activity, it cannot be enjoined by commands the way rituals are; it can only be indicated.[55]

Many of the pieces of evidence for who Bhaṭṭanāyaka was, in particular a long passage of his from the beginning of the *Abhinavabhāratī* that I will discuss below, show the strong influence of this type of theology. The comparison of aesthetic experience to the "relishing of highest *brahman*" is the most obvious, but it does not stand alone. The view that *rasa* is a form of awareness that is not directed to an object or a subject—indeed the view that subjectivity and objectivity are incoherent in the context of *rasa*—is strikingly Vedāntin. So is the view that *rasa* is something already existing [*siddha*] and is not "to-be-produced" [*sādhya*], which, as mentioned above, matches how this theology theorizes enlightenment and is almost diametrically opposed to Mīmāṃsā teleology. This particular idea is explicitly connected by Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan, in their translation, to the famous non-dual Vedāntin Śaṃkara's statement that knowledge of *brahman* cannot be brought about, because it always

51. This is common all across non-dual Vedānta and is present as well in Maṇḍanamiśra. See, for example, *BSi*, p. 28, where spiritual liberation is described by Maṇḍanamiśra as "the dissolution of name and form" *nāmarūpapravilaya*. Also p. 148, where he argues that "the Self appears as the proliferation of name-and-form" *ātmano nāmarūpaprapañcarūpeṇa prakāśanam.*

52. This is the famous *ābhāsavāda*, the doctrine that all appearances are real insofar as they exist as appearances.

53. Maṇḍanamiśra writes (*BSi*, p. 13): *aikātmye vibhāgasyāsatyatvāt, tadadhiṣṭhānaśravaṇādayo 'py asatyāḥ . . .* [*kiṃtu*] *nāyaṃ niyamaḥ asatyaṃ na kasmaicit kāryāya bhavatīti. bhavati hi māyā prīter bhayasya ca nimittam, asatyaṃ ca satyapratipatteḥ, yathā rekhāgavayaḥ* "With respect to unity, division is false, and so study, etc., which are based on that, are [also] false. Nevertheless, there is no rule that a false thing cannot produce an effect. For it is the case that illusion is [sometimes] the cause of joy and fear, and a false thing is [sometimes the cause] of a cognition of reality, as with a drawing of an ox."

54. See, for example, *BSi*, p. 121: *svarūpasthitilakṣaṇatvāt mokṣasya na kāryatā, prāg api svarūpasya bhāvāt* "Liberation is not an effect, because it is defined by resting in one's own nature, and one's own nature has always existed [and therefore can't be brought about]."

55. *BSi*, p. 115: *svātmasthitiḥ supraśāntā phalaṃ tan na vidheḥ padam // tatsādhanāvabodhe hi vidhātṛvyāpṛtir matā / apekṣitopāyataiva vidhir iṣṭo manīṣibhiḥ //* "Resting in the Self [i.e., spiritual liberation] is perfectly placid [i.e., actionless]. It is itself an end, not [a means, like] the subject of an injunction. For activity takes place when a [potential] cognizes something as a means [to an end], and injunction is understood by the wise to be a means to a desired end."

already exists.[56] In addition to this we see Bhaṭṭanāyaka employing terms—"proliferation of name and form," "clearing of delusions," "composed of light and bliss"—that have clear precedents in non-dual Vedānta.[57]

Bhaṭṭanāyaka's use of the term *bhāvanā*, though often taken as a reference to Mīmāṃsā, is also a clear sign of Vedānta influence. This is because the term *bhāvanā* is used in Vedānta as well, and in a very different sense from its use in Mīmāṃsā—a fact always overlooked in the literature on Bhaṭṭanāyaka. While Mīmāṃsakas used the term *bhāvanā* to refer to the force by which language impels us to action, *bhāvanā* in Vedānta (and other contemplative traditions) refers to the process of developing and refining a state of awareness, often through meditation, and often via a preliminarily stage mediated by language. Maṇḍanamiśra and Ādiśeṣa often use it in this sense.[58] Ādiśeṣa, for example, devotes vv. 57–59 of the *PĀS₁* to the topic:

> Having abandoned the beguiling dualistic imagination, illusion, whose form is error, he should bring about [*bhāvayet*] *brahman*, non-dual, entirely without parts. By means of *bhāvanā* he identifies entirely with stainless *brahman*, like water into water, milk into milk, breath into air. When, through *bhāvanā*, the mass of duality merges with *brahman*'s very being in this way, what delusion or sorrow is there for him, looking as he does on all things as *brahman*?

Maṇḍanamiśra, in a description even more similar to Bhaṭṭanāyaka's use of the term, writes:

> With respect to *brahman*, there are three cognitions. The first is from words. Then, after [the truth] has been pointed out by words, the [cognition] which carries this forward is called meditation [*dhyāna*], development [*bhāvanā*], contemplation [*upāsanā*], or other things. Then comes the arising of attainment in which all concepts melt away, which brings [*brahman*] into immediate presence.[59]

This kind of *bhāvanā* is not only germane to Bhaṭṭanāyaka's comparison to the "relishing of highest Brahman," but it is also exactly what Bhaṭṭanāyaka thinks literary language does to emotions. Emotions, for him, are transformed by literature into states of awareness in which

56. Masson, Ingalls, and Patwardhan 1990: 229 n. 18. Śaṅkara, as we have noted, does not seem to have been widely known in Kashmir at this time, but the idea is not at all unique to him.

57. Recall that Bhaṭṭanāyaka (*AbhBh-G,* p. 10) writes *niviḍanijamohasaṃkaṭatānivāraṇa- . . . prakā-śānandamayanijasaṃvid- . . . parabrahmāsvādasavidhena*, and in *AbhBh-V*, vol. 1 pp. 5–6 he writes *viśvam idam asatyanāmarūpaprapañcātmakam*. Examples of these terms in Vedānta literature abound. Here are just a few examples: Maṇḍanamiśra states at *Bsi*, p. 148: *ātmano nāmarūpaprapañcarūpeṇa prakāśanam* "the Self shines forth as the proliferation of name-and-form." Ādiśeṣa refers to enlightenment as the clearing of delusions at *PĀS₁*, vs. 57: *bhramasvarūpam vimohanīṃ māyām / utsṛjya . . . bhāvayed brahma.* "Having abandoned the beguiling dualistic imagination, illusion, whose form is error, he should bring about [*bhāvayet*] *brahman* . . ." Maṇḍanamiśra writes (*BSi,* p. 4) *brahmaṇaḥ svātmaprakāśasyānandasvabhāvaḥ . . .* "*Brahman,* who is self-illuminating, has a blissful nature . . ." Maṇḍanamiśra refers to "clearing the coverings of delusion," in terms very similar to Bhaṭṭanāyaka's, at *BSi*, p. 122: *mohāvaraṇavigame svarūpāvirbhāve 'svena rūpeṇābhiniṣpadyate' ity ucyate.* "When the obscurations of ignorance are ended and the true form is manifest, it is said 'it appears in its own form.'"

58. *PĀS₁*, pp. 28–30: *evaṃ dvaitavikalpāṃ bhramasvarūpāṃ vimohanīṃ māyām / utsṛjya sakalaniṣkalam advaitaṃ bhāvayet brahma // yadvat salile salilam kṣīre kṣīram samīraṇe vāyus / tadvat brahmaṇi vimale bhāvanayā tanmayatām upayāti // itthaṃ dvaitasamūhe bhāvanayā brahmabhūyam upayāte ko mohaḥ kas śokaḥ sarvaṃ brahma avalokayataḥ //* For use of the word *bhāvanā* in the same sense among non-dual Śaivas, see Abhinavagupta's *TĀ*, vv. 2.12–13, as well as Yogarāja's commentary on the *PĀS₂*, ad vv. 52 and 68.

59. *BSi*, p. 74: *tisraś ca pratipattayo brahmaṇi. prathamā tāvac chabdāt, anyā śabdāt pratipadya tatsantānavatī dhyānabhāvanopāsanādiśabdavācyā, anyā tato labdhaniṣpattir vigalitanikhilavikalpā sākṣāt karaṇarūpā.* This is glossed later in the text thus (p. 155): *dṛṣṭā ca jñānābhyāsasya samyagjñānaprasādahetutā loke. bhāvanāviśeṣād dhi abhūtam apy anubhavam āpadyate, kiṃ punarbhūtam,* which Thrasher (Potter 1981: 417) translates as: "Repeated practice of knowledge may produce greater clarity of knowledge in everyday life. Continuous concentration [*bhāvanā*] may make even a nonexistent object be experienced, how much more so a real object?"

the "concepts" of subject and object have melted away. Note, crucially, that Maṇḍanamiśra here, just like Bhaṭṭanāyaka, is describing a three-part process that begins with words, continues on with *bhāvanā* as the second stage, and then culminates in experience. Now, as I mentioned above, Bhaṭṭanāyaka included rhetorical figures in the second stage, that of *bhāvanā*. And although rhetorical figures and other literary devices are not themselves a form of meditation strictly speaking, they are clearly understood by Bhaṭṭanāyaka to be conditions that allow a state of mind to expand and deepen, just like certain physical practices such as posture and breath retention in meditative traditions. So the analogy actually holds quite well: in both literature and spiritual practice, certain factors prompt and facilitate the "development" [*bhāvanā*] of an experience or a type of awareness. And in both cases the awareness in question is not awareness of an object, but a kind of subtle, permanent, objectless awareness, underlying all other experiences and already established [*siddha*]. Furthermore, this awareness can only be revealed by factors that "remove delusions" and dissolve subject and object, and it does not "belong" to oneself as an individual, even though an individual can access it. All this is distinctly Vedāntin and bears little resemblance to Mīmāṃsā. We cannot be sure, of course, that the particular passage above was the source of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas. But it fits the structure of his thought much more closely than Mīmāṃsā does, and if Bhaṭṭanāyaka didn't take his ideas about *bhāvanā* from Maṇḍanamiśra, he clearly took them from someone very much like him.[60]

These considerations are all bolstered when we look at the beginning of Abhinavagupta's commentary on *Nāṭyaśāstra,* where he gives the longest quote we currently possess from Bhaṭṭanāyaka. This quote too is clearly affiliated with non-dual Vedānta and is worth citing in full.[61] With some very slight editing, this passage reads as follows:

> But according to Bhaṭṭanāyaka: "I will [now] describe drama, which *brahman*,[62] the supreme soul, promulgated, i.e., gave as an example, [for how people] grasp at unreal divisions caused by ignorance. For the gestures of [characters like] Rāma and Rāvaṇa are unreal. They are performed by an actor who is similar to *brahman* in that he does not [really] leave his own nature [when he appears in their form]. They are essentially imagination, and so have an unfixed form

60. This, I believe, explains what Bhaṭṭanāyaka meant by *anyā bhāvanā*, "another kind of *bhāvanā*" (*AbhBh-V*, vol 1. p. 271: *abhidhā bhāvanā cānyā tadbhogīkṛtam eva ca*). Ollett thinks that Bhaṭṭanāyaka here must either be distinguishing his theory of *bhāvanā* from Kumārila's, or else distinguishing the second step of the process from the whole threefold process overall, and for Ollett (2016: 588) this is proof that Bhaṭṭanāyaka must also have referred to the entire process as "*bhāvanā*." It is, however, quite probable that he is contrasting literary *bhāvanā* with *bhāvanā* as meditation. It is a different kind of mental development, which leads not to *brahman* but to something that is *like brahman*.

61. I thank Ben Williams for making his preliminary translation of this passage available to me. I have modified his translation significantly, but it was nevertheless immensely helpful. Dezso (2007: 134 n. 144) posits that this is not a quote but rather a summary given by Abhinavagupta to introduce the verse at the end of the passage. In this he defers to Chintamani (1927: 268). This is presented by both scholars as an assumption, and I see no reason for it—the passage seems straightforwardly like a quote. But if I am wrong and this is just a summary, my points still stand. Chintamani also says in this same article that the passage is probably not taken from Bhaṭṭanāyaka's commentary on the *NŚ* and speculates that it may be taken from a commentary on the *DhĀ*. Again, this seems purely speculative, but whether this passage comes from one text or another is not as important as whether it reflects Bhaṭṭanāyaka's ideas. And everyone seems to agree it does.

62. This could, of course, also refer to the creator-god Brahmā, mythical expounder of the *NŚ*, whose name is the same as the non-dual Vedāntin's *brahman* except in the masculine rather than neuter gender. The inflection here would be the same in either case, making it ambiguous which is being referred to. I have taken it as referring to the Vedāntin *brahman* because of the clear theological implications of the passage overall, because Bhaṭṭanāyaka reads Bharata's mention of it as a reference to "the highest transcendent human goal," and because it is used again two lines later to refer to something that appears in illusory forms without abandoning its own essential form—something Brahmā never does and *brahman* always does. My argument, however, does not depend on this.

that can instantly take on one hundred thousand shapes [*kalpanā*], although [they are] different from such things as dreaming. [They] arise out of a deep rapture [*graha*] of the heart. Somehow, [they] appear as [this] wondrous unreal behavior. In that way, although [merely] appearing, they become the means for human ends. In the [same] way, this universe is just like that and consists in the proliferation of unreal names and forms, and still [*atha ca*] brings one to the highest human goal [i.e., spiritual liberation] by force of such things as hearing and reflecting [upon the Veda]. Thus, by mentioning the highest transcendent human goal [i.e., in virtue of the fact that Bharata mentions *brahman* in the text], the aesthetic sentiment of Quiescence is hinted at. This will be [stated in chapter six]: '*Rasa*s arise from the Quiescent *rasa*, each having taken on its own [particular] cause.' Therefore, by means of this [statement] the supreme aim is stated." This explanation is found in the *Sahṛdayadarpaṇa.* As it says [there]: "Homage to Śiva, the poet who creates the world, because of whom people at each instant [become] connoisseurs of the dramatic production that is the world."[63]

If ever one were to write a non-dual Vedāntin literary theory, this would be it. It is true, of course, that the reference to *brahman* is probably occasioned by the fact that Bhaṭṭanāyaka is commenting on the first verse of the *Nāṭyaśāstra,* which refers to the Puranic god Brahmā, and that as a commentator he must therefore gloss this term (Dezso 2007: 134–35). But this does not in any way require the extended Vedāntic gloss that he gives, nor does it call for any reference to the non-dual *brahman* principle. This is a choice that Bhaṭṭanāyaka has made. The proliferation of "name and form"; a supreme soul who appears in the guise of illusory beings without thereby losing his status as supreme soul; the theater understood as an example of how humans spend their lives grasping at completely false qualifications that are based on ignorance; the quasi-paradox that texts can enter into this false dream-world and initiate real and valuable cognitions even though their appearance is also part of the illusion—all these are hallmarks of non-dual Vedānta philosophy.[64] Even treating the controversial ninth *rasa*, the Quiescent or Peaceful *rasa*, as the single basis out of which the proliferation of all other *rasa*s arise is related to this philosophy, in which *brahman,* which is itself supremely quiescent, is the basis for the proliferation of all the forms of the universe.

There are a wide variety of schools and positions within non-dual Vedānta, and there are important differences among Vedāntin thinkers. Too much of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's thought has been lost for us to determine whether he is following a particular Vedānta philosopher or striking out on his own, or combining views. But what we know about his thought clearly matches what is widely shared among all non-dual Vedāntins. It also makes quite a bit of sense as a literary theory. So even though the precise details may have been lost, there really is no doubt that Bhaṭṭanāyaka was strongly influenced by some form of this tradition.

Knowing this allows us to generate the following overall sketch of his literary theory and clarify what he was trying to say. Bhaṭṭanāyaka is portrayed by Abhinavagupta as criticizing the views that *rasa* is apprehended as an emotion belonging either to oneself or to the char-

63. *AbhBh-V*, vol. 1 pp. 5–6 ad *NŚ* 1.1cd: *bhaṭṭanāyakas tu brahmaṇā paramātmanā yad udāhṛtam avidyā viracitacitanissārabhedagrahe yad udāharaṇīkṛtaṃ tan nāṭyam tad vakṣyāmi. yathā hi kalpanāmātrasāraṃ tata evānavasthitaikarūpaṃ kṣaṇena kalpanāśatasahasrasahaṃ svapnādivilakṣaṇam api suṣṭhutarāṃ hṛdayagrahanidānam atyaktasvālambanabrahmakalpanaṭoparacitaṃ rāmarāvaṇādiceṣṭitam asatyaṃ kuto 'py abhūtādbhūtavṛttyā bhāti. tathā bhāsamānam api ca pumarthopāyatām eti. tathā tādṛgeva viśvam idam asatyanāmarūpaprapañcātmakam atha ca śravaṇamananādivaśena paramapumarthaprāpakam iti lokottaraparamapuruṣārthasūcanena śāntarasopakṣepo 'yam bhaviṣyati / svaṃ svaṃ nimittam ādāya śāntād utpadyate rasaḥ. iti. tadanena pāramārthikaṃ prayojanam uktam. iti vyākhyānaṃ sahṛdayadarpaṇe paryagrahīt.* The only scholar I am aware of to take this passage seriously as theology is Leavitt, in a footnote (2011: 282 n. 3). Pollock has recently translated it and refers very briefly in footnotes to the fact that there are Vedānta references in it (2016: 367 n. 3 and 368 n. 18), but he does not explore what this might mean.

64. Recall Maṇḍanamiśra's statement that unreal things can have real effects, including effects on our emotions. Bhaṭṭanāyaka, in this passage, seems to be simply including theater in the category of "unreal things."

acter. Bhaṭṭanāyaka thinks he can show that contradictions occur as soon as one holds either of these views. Essentially, he argues that once one divides the aesthetic world into subject (spectator) and object (character/actor) and tries to locate the aesthetic emotion within that framework, one inevitably runs into philosophical problems. This critique seems likely to be rooted in larger Vedānta critiques of the problems of dualistically dividing the world into subject and object.

Since there are inevitable contradictions in this model, Bhaṭṭanāyaka proposes an alternative. He suggests that just as statements in the Vedas, though they are "false" (i.e., based on concepts and duality), can remove our delusions and trigger an experience in which the limitations of subject and object disappear and the mind simply rests in the bliss of impersonal awareness, so in the same way literature uses imaginary characters, scenes, and language to trigger an experience in which the limited particularity of the spectator and the character are dissolved and one rests in a state of blissful and actionless awareness, without any subject or object. This is the only possible way to make sense of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's statement that the experience of *rasa* is a "drop" of the bliss of *brahman*: it is structurally analogous to it, cognitively similar to it, and elicited in similar ways. The only difference seems to be that *rasa* is not absolute but is filtered through our ordinary minds, and thus is inflected by the particular ratios of psychological elements that make up our limited minds: *sattva*, *rajas,* and *tamas,* terms that come from Sāṃkhya but were frequently employed by non-dual Vedāntins. The permutations of these three elements, presumably, account for the nine different *rasa*s. Nevertheless, all these permutations are based on one underlying, unified form of awareness—the Quiescent *rasa*, the *brahman* of aesthetic experience, so to speak.

Bhaṭṭanāyaka's literary theory is therefore thoroughly influenced by Vedānta in significant and ineluctable ways, such that any attempt to understand his ideas in isolation from Vedānta will ultimately be incoherent, both in its account of what Bhaṭṭanāyaka was actually proposing and in its explanations of what may have motivated and grounded it. However, the explanatory force of this theology goes further, explaining not only what Bhaṭṭanāyaka was saying, but also Abhinavagupta's complex relationship to him.

REVISITING ABHINAVAGUPTA'S RESPONSE

Taking Bhaṭṭanāyaka's Vedānta affinities seriously does much to explain the main criticism that Abhinavagupta makes of him in the *Abhinavabhāratī*. Just after summarizing Bhaṭṭanāyaka's position, Abhinavagupta asserts, somewhat enigmatically, "Now this [i.e., Bhaṭṭanāyaka's] position is not accepted [by us], precisely because we do not accept the view of Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa. So this criticism never has the chance to arise. And we are not aware of any form of enjoyment in this world that is different from cognition [*pratīti*]."[65] Abhinavagupta responds to Bhaṭṭanāyaka by accepting that Lollaṭa was wrong and that *rasa* is not the apprehension of an emotion as attached to a individual person. Nevertheless, he says, it is a cognition that apprehends something, as all forms of enjoyment are apprehensions of something. He qualifies this by saying "in this world," but the qualification is unnecessary, because Abhinavagupta also accepts the analogy Bhaṭṭanāyaka makes between religious and aesthetic experience,[66] and in Abhinavagupta's theology God's enjoyment does apprehend something: itself. This self-apprehension is not the same as self-objectification, but it is a

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65. *AbhBh-G*, p. 11: *tatra pūrvapakṣo 'yam bhaṭṭalollaṭapakṣānabhyupagamād eva nābhyupagata iti taddūṣaṇam anutthānopahatam eva. pratītyādivyatiriktaś ca saṃsāre ko bhoga iti na vidmaḥ.*

66. For example, he says quite clearly: "The relishing of *rasa* is a small fragment of the bliss of God's repose . . ." Quoted and translated in Gerow (1994: 188). The original is *DhĀ*, p. 543: *parameśvaraviśrāntyānandaḥ . . . vipruṇmātrāvabhāso hi rasāsvāda . . .*

form of cognition, and it is the basis of all subjectivity and is itself enjoyment, *camatkāra*, by definition. Abhinavagupta also explains aesthetic experience in this way.[67] He insists that *rasa* is both "a drop of divine relishing" and also a cognition of something, because Śiva's divine self-relishing is a cognition of itself. This idea conforms exactly to the kind of criticism a non-dual Śaiva would make of a non-dual Vedāntin, for whom *brahman* is blissful but not engaged in the activity of *apprehending* anything. Such a God, for a non-dual Śaiva, would not be sentient at all, let alone blissful.[68] This fully explains why we find Abhinavagupta insisting over and over again: "And [*rasa*] is definitely a cognition, whose essence is tasting, in which joy [*rati*] alone appears." Or again: "the unavoidable fact remains that *rasa* is perceived. For if it were not perceived we could have no dealings with it, just as we can have no dealings with a goblin" (Masson and Patwardhan 1969: 224). These statements are only fully explained by the fact that they are directed against a non-dual Vedānta literary

67. This has been noted by other scholars and is explained much more fully in Reich 2016: 170–208. I will only note here briefly two points at which Abhinavagupta's theory becomes quite clear. The first is *ĪPVV*, vol. 3 p. 251: *prakāśasya ca paradaśāyāṃ camatkāramātrātmā yo vimarśas tad eva svātantryaṃ . . . "camatkāro hi": iti svātmani ananyāpekṣe viśramaṇam. evaṃ bhuñjānatārūpaṃ camattvaṃ, tad eva karoti saṃrambhe,*[this comma seems to be misplaced. I take it as more properly placed after *karoti*, making *saṃrambhe* the locus for the following *vimṛśati*, which contrasts nicely with *anyatra*. jdr] *vimṛśati na anyatra anudhāvati . . . kāvyanāṭyarasādāv api bhāvicittavṛttyantarodayaniyamātmakavighnavirahita eva āsvādo rasanātmā camatkāra iti uktam anyatra* "At the highest level, the very self-awareness of luminosity/consciousness, which is essentially just bliss, is freedom . . . 'For bliss' [here he is quoting from the root text he is commenting upon]: [bliss] is just repose in one's own self, which is independent. Thus the *camat*-ness [of *camatkāra*] just has the form of enjoyment [*bhuñjānatārūpam*], [and bliss] creates that, [i.e.,] it reflects on itself primarily and doesn't run off anywhere else . . . Bliss is also described elsewhere as the relishing, or savoring, that is devoid of obstacles with an essentially fixed form that arises as the mental function of emotional beings in the *rasa* of plays and poems." The second is *TĀ*, vv. 29.148: *saṃvitparimarśātmā [sic] dhvanis tadeveha mantravīryaṃ syāt*. "*Dhvani* is essentially the mind's reflexive awareness, and for this very reason it is the strength of mantras." Jayaratha's gloss on this is equally clear (*TĀ*, vol. 11 p. 103): *tatraiva saṃvitparāmarśātmani ahaṃcamatkāramaye dhvanau . . .* "With respect to that very *dhvani*, which is essentially the mind's reflexive awareness, composed of the delight of [the experience of] 'I' . . ." To understand why Abhinavagupta thinks that reflexive awareness is, by its very nature, blissful, it is necessary to go much deeper into his theology than I can do here in this paper.

68. Notwithstanding Maṇḍanamiśra's comments on the "self-illuminating" nature of awareness, the issue of whether this self-apprehension is an *activity* was a deep difference between Vedānta and Śaivism and was recognized as such by Śaivas. Yogarāja, the disciple of Abhinavagupta's disciple Kṣemarāja, commenting on Abhinavagupta's *PĀS₂*, says of the non-dual Vedāntins (whom he calls *brahmavādin*s): "It is not the case that [the ultimate principle] is devoid of energy [*śakti*], and is, as it were, insentient, as is maintained by [them]" [translation from Bansat-Boudon and Tripathi 2011: 107; the original is on p. 363]. And again: "what has not been recognized [by them] is the freedom of that conscious principle (*vedana*), which, endowed with life, becomes the efficient cause of the construction of the universe" [translation on p. 157, original text on p. 370]. For the identification of sentience with the activity of self-apprehension in Abhinavagupta's theology, see *ĪPV*, vol. 1 p. 94: *dṛk jñānam, tac ca jaḍāt vibhidyate svaprakāśaikarūpatayā*. "Cognition means awareness, and that is distinguished from something insentient by its self-illuminating form." See also *ĪPVV*, vol. 2 p. 177: *camatkṛtir hi buñjānasya yā kriyā bhogasamāpattimaya ānandaḥ . . . prakāśasya prānatvena uktaḥ*. "Delight is the action of enjoying, the bliss composed of reaching the state of enjoying . . . It is the life-breath of [God's] luminosity [i.e., his awareness]." For the identification of this action with delight see *ĪPVV*, vol. 2 p. 179: *yato vimarśa eva camatkāraḥ, sa eva ca ajāḍyam [sic]*. "*Vimarśa* alone is bliss, and that alone is sentient." See also *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī*, vol. 2 pp. 177–78: *svarūpasya svātmanaḥ paripūrṇanijasvabhāvaprakāśanam eva parāmarśamayatāṃ dadhad ānanda ity ucyate*. Ratié (2009: 358 n. 29) translates this as "What is called 'bliss' (*ānanda*) is the [manifestation] of 'one's own form,' that is to say, of oneself; [in other words,] it is the manifestation, which takes the form of a conscious grasping (*parāmarśa*), of one's own nature, which is absolutely full (*paripūrṇa*)." For the identification of all this with independence, see *ĪPVV*, vol. 3 p. 251: *prakāśasya ca paradaśāyāṃ camatkāramātrātmā yo vimarśas tad eva svātantryaṃ*. "At the highest level, the very self-awareness of the luminosity [of consciousness], which is essentially just bliss, is freedom." I have tried to demonstrate in detail exactly how and why these equations were made by Abhinavagupta in Reich 2016: 108–208.

theory in which *rasa* is a form of awareness devoid of subjectivity and activity and thus not a really a "cognition" at all, according to the Śaiva definition.

The theological differences with respect to action also explain why we find Abhinavagupta insisting that *rasa* has the form of something that is to be accomplished [*sādhya*], not something already accomplished [*siddha*].[69] This can only be directed against Bhaṭṭanāyaka's contrary assertion that, like *brahman*, *rasa* is something already accomplished. Abhinavagupta's counter-position is based on the idea that *rasa* is *sādhya* precisely because, like the "*brahman*" of the non-dual Śaivas, it is awareness in the form of action and must be enacted. Abhinavagupta's God is perpetually engaged in an activity—that of joyfully savoring himself—and Abhinavagupta understands *rasa* as a version of this activity of self-relishing. He writes "[*Rasa*] makes itself felt as something the whole life of which consists in the ongoing process of relishing and which thereby differs from something like joy or grief, which is a finished or frozen state."[70] Abhinavagupta's assertion is thus predicated on a simultaneous rejection both of Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Vedānta: *rasa*, which is a drop of divine bliss, is an activity, just like divine bliss.

These theological differences also clarify some significant stray comments Abhinavagupta makes that are directed at Bhaṭṭanāyaka's theory and that we might otherwise overlook as insignificant if we are not aware of the background. If *brahman* is eternal, unchanging, blissful, and actionless awareness, as Maṇḍanamiśra claimed, then the Vedic sentences that trigger one's experience of this divine state do not ultimately produce any activity. Their entire functioning culminates in non-action. This, however, flies in the face of the Mīmāṃsā understandings of Vedic language, in which all Vedic statements must ultimately be related to prompting some form of action. Maṇḍanamiśra is therefore obligated to show that, *pace* Mīmāṃsā, not all language prompts action and that sometimes language simply produces awareness of finished facts, which affects us strongly without requiring any activity on our part. He explains:

> In the world, it is not the case that sentences refer only to what needs to be accomplished, for when delightful things are communicated, as in "Your good fortune grows, a son is born to you!" it is clear that these [sentences] don't enjoin or prohibit any action, but that they simply produce joy. And there is no [implicit] command here such as "Be joyful" for his joy is accomplished just by force of the facts, and without dependence on any particular instruction.[71]

69. This, in turn, would explain why Abhinavagupta, unlike Bhaṭṭanāyaka, really does seem to have Mīmāṃsā in mind when he discusses literary theory. See David 2016 and Ollett 2016. Ollett (p. 592) says that the most "straightforward" explanation for why Abhinavagupta begins his own account of the *rasa* experience with Mīmāṃsā is that he had adopted Kumārila from Bhaṭṭanāyaka. But given all the evidence of the Vedānta influence on Bhaṭṭanāyaka, I think a more straightforward explanation is rather that Abhinavagupta starts his account with a Mīmāṃsaka use of *bhāvanā* because he wants to describe a literary process that leads to a form of action, rather than an actionless state of awareness. A Vedāntin use of *bhāvanā* in which *bhāvanā* leads to an actionless state of awareness is therefore reinterpreted in terms of the Mīmāṃsaka understanding of *bhāvanā* in which it leads to an action—the action of self-reflection. Also significant is the fact that Abhinavagupta seems to draw his Mīmāṃsā theories from the Mīmāṃsā works of Maṇḍanamiśra himself (David 2016: 140–43).

70. *DhĀ*, p. 80: *na cāyaṃ rasādir arthaḥ putras te jātaḥ ity ato yathā harṣo jāyate tathā. nāpi lakṣaṇayā. api tu sahṛdayasya hṛdayasaṃvādabalād vibhāvānubhāvapratītau tanmayībhāvenāsvādyamāna eva rasyamānataikaprāṇaḥ siddhasvabhāvasukhādivilakṣaṇaḥ parisphurati.* Translated in Masson, Patwardhan, and Ingalls (1990: 108).

71. *BSi*, p. 23: *na ca kāryaniṣṭhāny eva loke vacāṃsi; tathā hi—priyākhyānāni 'diṣṭyā vardhase, putras te jātaḥ' iti na pravṛttaye nivṛttaye vā, dṛśyante ca sukhotpādanaprayojanāni. na ca 'sukhī bhava' iti tatra pravṛttir upadiśyate, vastusāmarthyād eva tatsiddher upadeśasyānapekṣaṇāt.*

When Abhinavagupta rejects the idea that *rasa* is a "finished or frozen" emotional state produced by words, the example he gives of the words that might produce such a state is "A son is born to you." This is no coincidence. It was Maṇḍanamiśra who first used this phrase as an example of a sentence that prompts no action, and this is peculiar to him and found nowhere else.[72] When Abhinavagupta distinguishes this particular sentence from sentences that produce *rasa,* he is not making an idle or offhand comment; he is responding directly to an aesthetic theory—Bhaṭṭanāyaka's—that is modeled on a Vedāntin theology of mind and language. So again, unless we understand Bhaṭṭanāyaka to be propounding a literary theory that is modeled on Maṇḍanamiśra's theology or something very similar to it, we will fail to fully understand this discussion.

If I am correct in my assessment of Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Abhinavagupta's relationship to him, it would not be the only time that Abhinavagupta co-opted and rewrote non-dual Vedānta ideas. In fact, he wrote an entire text, *Paramārthasāra*, which is nothing but a non-dual Śaiva rewrite of Ādiśeṣa's earlier, non-dual Vedānta text of the same name.[73] Accordingly, taking large parts of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's non-dual Vedānta ideas and fitting them into a non-dual Śaiva worldview is not simply something that Abhinavagupta might have considered—it is an iteration of a project we already know him to have undertaken. This makes it even more plausible that Abhinavagupta is being faithful and accurate in presenting Bhaṭṭanāyaka as a Vedāntin.

CONCLUSION

Bhaṭṭanāyaka's most famous and influential idea is that aesthetic experience is similar to the "relishing of highest *brahman*." What I have tried to do here is to take this statement seriously and show that this is more than just a passing statement or a superficial attempt at legitimation. Not only are there many other ideas and terms used by Bhaṭṭanāyaka that corroborate this and have clear parallels in contemporaneous Vedānta literature, but these all fit together to form a coherent vision of aesthetic experience and its relationship to a non-dual Vedānta vision of the world. Tracking the theological dimensions of these ideas reveals a highly interesting way to understand works of literature, the emotions they provoke, and the relationship between those emotions, the self, and the universe in which that self is situated.

I have also tried to show that tracking the theological dimensions of these ideas is crucial to understanding their reception and later development. Bhaṭṭanāyaka's text may have disappeared from history, and it may have lost the battle of ideas in historical terms. But in its refutation and co-option by Abhinavagupta it has left a permanent and indelible mark in South Asian history. In his response to Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Abhinavagupta essentially accepts the fundamental premise that aesthetic experience is analogous to religious experience. He differs from Bhaṭṭanāyaka only in that he has an entirely different model of what religious experience is. The difference between non-dual Vedānta and non-dual Śaivism is the real basis of Abhinavagupta's response, and it explains his peculiar stance of refutation and adoption much more than the influence of Mīmāṃsā. If anything, Abhinavagupta's use of Mīmāṃsā ideas was part of his creative re-interpretation of the idea of literary *bhāvanā*, rather than a simple adoption from Bhaṭṭanāyaka.

Although we no longer have access to Bhaṭṭanāyaka's text, the quotes and summaries Abhinavagupta gives us, as well as the details of his complex treatment of the text, are very

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72. Larry McCrea, pers. comm. As an anonymous reviewer of this article pointed out, the sentence as such is found before Maṇḍanamiśra, but not as an example of this particular principle. See *Kāsikāvṛtti* ad Pāṇini 3.4.59 and *Candravyākarana* ad 2.2.41.

73. See Bansat-Boudon and Tripathi 2011: 1–58.

informative. Though we may never know to what degree they reflect exactly what the real, historical Bhaṭṭanāyaka thought, they do show clearly that Abhinavagupta portrayed him as primarily influenced by Vedānta and that this portrayal was a central part of Abhinavagupta's own response to him. Without understanding this we cannot fully understand what is being portrayed, nor why Abhinavagupta responds as he does, and therefore cannot fully understand a crucial and pivotal moment in the history of Sanskrit literary theory.

ABBREVIATIONS AND EDITIONS OF SANSKRIT TEXTS

AbhBh-G   *Abhinavabhāratī* of Abhinavagupta

        The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta, ed. Raniero Gnoli. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968.

AbhBh-V   *Abhinavabhāratī* of Abhinavagupta

        [see *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharatamuni]

BSi   *Brahmasiddhi* of Maṇḍanamiśra

        Brahmasiddhi, with Commentary Saṃkhapāni, ed. S. Kuppuswami Sastri and M. V. Vacaspati. 2nd ed. Sri Garib Das Oriental Series, no. 16. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1984.

DhĀ   *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana with the *Locana* of Abhinavagupta

        The Dhvanyāloka of Śrī Ānandavardhana with the Lochana Sanskrit Commentary of Śrī Abhinavagupta and the Prakāśa Hindi Translation of Both the Texts, ed. Ācārya Jagannāth Pāthak. The Vidyabhawan Sanskrit Granthamala, no. 97. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, 1965.

NŚ   *Nāṭyaśāstra of* Bharatamuni with the *Abhinavabhāratī* of Abhinavagupta

        The Nāṭyaśāstra with the Commentary Abhinavabhāratī by Abhinavaguptācārya, ed. K. Krishnamoorthy. 4 vols. 4th rev. ed. Vādodara: Oriental Institute, 1992–2006.

ĪPV   *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* of Abhinavagupta

        Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī: Bhāskarīsaṃvalitā, ed. K. C. Pandey and K. Balasubrahmanya Iyer. 3 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986.

ĪPVV   *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* of Abhinavagupta

        The Iśvarapratyabhijñā Vivritivimarśinī, ed. Madhusūdan Kaul Shāstrī. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, nos. 60, 62, 65. Bombay: Nirṇaya Sagar Press, 1938–1941.

PĀS₁   *Paramārthasāra* of Ādiśeṣa

        The Essence of Supreme Truth: Paramārthasāra, ed. and tr. Henry Danielson. Leiden: Brill, 1980.

PĀS₂   *Paramārthasāra* of Abhinavagupta

        An Introduction to Tantric Philosophy: The Paramārthasāra of Abhinavagupta with the Commentary of Yogarāja, ed. and tr. Lyne Bansat-Boudon and K. D. Tripathi. Routledge Studies in Tantric Traditions. London: Routledge, 2011.

PTV   *Parātrīśikā-vivaraṇa* of Abhinavagupta

        Parātrīśikā-vivaraṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism, ed. Bettina Baumer and Swami Lakshmanjoo, tr. Jaideva Singh. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988.

TĀ   *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta

        The Tantrāloka of Abhinavagupta with the Commentary by Rājānaka Jayaratha, ed. M. R. Shāstrī. 12 vols. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, vols. 23, 28, 29, 30, 35, 36, 41, 47, 52, 57, 58, 59 [various presses and publication years].

VV   *Vyaktiviveka* of Mahimabhaṭṭa

        The Vyaktiviveka of Śrī Rājānaka Mahimabhaṭṭa, Edited with a Sanskrit Commentary of Rājānak [sic] Ruyyaka and Hindi Commentary and Notes, ed. Rewāprasāda Dwivedī. Kashi Sanskrit Series, vol. 12. Varanasi: Chaukambha Sanskrit Series Office, 1964.

SK   *Spandakārikā* of Vasugupta
               Spandakārikās of Vasugupta, with the Nirṇaya of Kṣemarāja, ed. Madhusūdan Kaul
                    Śāstri. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, no. 42. Srinagar: Kashmir Pratap Steam
                    Press, 1925.
SN   *Spandanirṇaya* of Kṣemarāja
               [see *Spandakārikā* of Vasugupta]

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